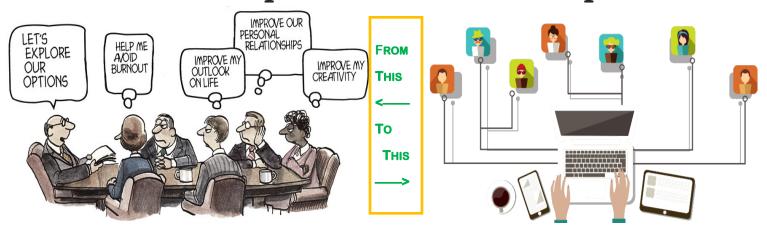# Employee Assistance Program

CHRISTINE ROBINSON   christine.b.robinson2.civ@mail.mil

**Currently working remotely but STILL AVAILABLE via email and phone!!!
For immediate EAP issues, please call 315—772-2597****

Follow our Facebook page for daily MINDFUL MOMENTS and other posts giving you useful information to get through these stressful times!!   www.facebook.com/FortDrumASAP

Our New "Workplace" — One for the Supervisors

Every HR pro knows an employee's mental health is just as important as their physical health. And when employees aren't getting what they need, their work suffers. One of the main things that negatively contributes to employee mental health? Feelings of isolation and loneliness in the workplace. So, what happens when there is a pandemic and most, if not all, of your staff are forced to work remotely in isolation?!

In a normal (non-pandemic) work environment, the Future Workplace's 2018 Global Work Connectivity study found more than half of those surveyed often felt lonely due to very little face to face interaction. So how do you think those employees are feeling now? This time in our lives is new for everyone. And coming up with a one size fits all work from home policy is definitely a challenge. So make sure you keep in mind that not everyone's personality is going to adapt to this new norm as quickly as you hope. Remote work has become the new status quo and every employee is likely to react differently. The way that we react to the unexpected demand is likely to relate to our personality. Here are a couple of points to remember—

Ensure you are still facilitating communication— Employees need to know they are still a part of a team. Find new ways to communicate besides email. Many jobs might not have required the employee to take home a work computer so set a schedule to keep in touch in different ways. You don't want to find yourself in an endless stream of text messages so plan for a video conference or at a minimum, a phone call. Try to get everyone together via a virtual hangout to touch base and encourage socialization.

Celebrate achievements— With your employees working hard on their own things, it can be tough for them to know what their colleagues are up to. By celebrating great work with the whole team, people won't feel so isolated anymore.

Ways to help your workforce…

<u>Introvert vs. Extrovert</u>— This aspect considers whether an employee prefers to focus on the outside world of events and stimuli, or on the inner world of thoughts and feelings. Introverts, who enjoy a calm, peaceful environment, might initially enjoy working from home, as long as there are not too many people – particularly children – around to distract them. Extraverts may have a difficult time with the transition, as they tend to enjoy a busy, lively environment that provides lots of opportunities for interaction – this may not be easy to achieve at home.

27% of employed parents were concerned about managing children, as they try to stay productive at the time of coronavirus. To aid Introverts, you can formulate clear work schedules with plenty of time for childcare so employees do not find it difficult to focus. Extraverts face a different issue altogether. 22% of employees are worried about going "stir crazy" because they were mandated to stay at home. To alleviate this, you can use remote collaboration tools to hold town halls, virtual events, and impromptu chat sessions to maintain a feeling of community, despite the coronavirus outbreak. Conferencing tools such as Skype and Zoom can help regular person-to-person contact, and facilitate more interactive remote get-togethers.

While productivity while working from home might be a top priority, employee wellbeing must take center stage in such testing times. Social distancing and working from home helps maintain your workforce's physical wellbeing. But tailoring remote working policies to various personality types is critical for their mental health. It is also important not to overstress performance during the coronavirus (or any) pandemic. Employees are already trying to balance personal and professional obligations, often without the help of their usual support system. That's why leaving some margin for error or marginal loss of productivity is so essential – it takes away the sense of pressure and allows employees of different personalities to enjoy the benefits of remote working, contributing meaningfully to your company's growth even during this difficult period.

***Here are some tools you can use yourself and share with your team to be successful as a remote worker:

- *Create "your" workspace.* If you can find a room in your home or even just a private space that you can call "your office," do it! This is important to help you (1) get organized and (2) separate your work life from your home life. This allows you to "leave work" at the end of the day and set boundaries for others to know when you are working.

- *Add personal touches.* You are going to spend a lot of time in your office space, so make it cozy and make it something that supports both your creativity and your productivity. For example, if music increases your productivity and happiness during the workday, add it to your new space.

- *Set daily goals or write task lists.* Setting goals is always a best practice, but especially so when you do not have work colleagues around you to suggest a meeting, or to start a discussion on getting things done or to check on your progress with a project.

- *Take breaks, and stand up.* Walk away from your desk and office during the day. It is very easy to go through your workday without any breaks because you are alone and don't have others to talk or go out with. Many people working from home think they have to be 100 percent productive and 100 percent focused the entire day. The reality is that we all need a break!! Taking breaks will actually improve your productivity.

- *Try to maintain working hours.* Because you are at home, it is easy to go back to the office after dinner and work to finish this or that. You are responsible for your own work-life balance. Having your "work space" together with your "home space" will make achieving this balance a little more difficult, so be intentional.

- *Communicate, communicate, communicate.* Working remotely means you will not run into a colleague in the office kitchen or hallway and have that casual "chat" that will help you learn about something you did not even know was going on or uncover details about something you were trying to get an update on. Figuring out how you communicate best with others is super important. Team chats also help everyone get on the same page. Finally, if the communication is via email and confusion remains after numerous back-and-forth emails (five is my threshold), get on a phone/video call to clarify.

AND, AS ALWAYS….I AM AVAILABLE TO YOU ALL! LET'S SET UP A CALL OR VIDEOCHAT VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS, GOOGLE DUO OR FACE TIME WITH YOUR TEAM TO GET SOME STRESS OUT SO WE CAN CONTINUE TO BE THE BEST WE CAN BE! —CHRISTINE 315-772-2597